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Abstract of the national paper of Colombia

I. General

1. Like most developing countries, Colombia is a user of space technology and it is in that context that the paper presented reflects the concerns of the country, which views one of its main priorities as the strengthening of international cooperation and support for technology transfer, as well as the development of human resources to achieve more effective utilization of space technology and its applications.

II. Use of space technology and its applications

2. Colombia uses space technology applications in its continuing endeavours to improve the quality of life of its citizens, to which end it has fostered research on the Earth and its environment with a view to preventing natural disasters or mitigating their consequences. Space technology is similarly used in the monitoring of environmental hazards, analysis of coastal areas and forecasting of climate change so that the data obtained can be used for planning purposes to ensure rational land use and management, optimum utilization of freshwater resources and the development of production capabilities in the agricultural, livestock, forestry and fisheries sectors.

3. Likewise, the knowledge yielded by space technology applications is used in the management and planning of resources to ensure their proper utilization and to ensure that this in turn is translated into genuine progress for the development of the communities that are the focus of social advancement programmes.

4. A further area in which Colombia has achieved substantial progress is the use of space technology in the operation of navigation and positioning systems, for the purpose of substantially improving air safety and hence better utilization of national airspace, thereby fully exploiting its potential and enabling aircraft using routes over Colombian territory to take better advantage of the country's geographical location.

III. Social development

5. In addition to the above-mentioned areas, a further area that uses space technology applications and has a real impact on social development is local telephone services. This is one of the most rapidly progressing and developing national sectors and signifies a major extension of satellite communication coverage, providing communities with a greater range

of local telephone and radio services, which have been used, for example, for communications to and from regions hit by natural disasters, with a consequent improvement in the utilization of the resources assigned to disaster management.

6. Other sectors in which space technology advances have been introduced and used are the following: cartography, agrology, geography and land registration. The studies carried out in those areas have all contributed to a better understanding of the real conditions prevailing in the country and have led to the adoption of better focused development plans and strategies, which in turn have improved the management of physical, human and financial resources and have guaranteed their rational use, while also yielding a corresponding increase in productivity.

IV. International cooperation

7. Colombia is paying particular attention to this area, but has not made any major progress, mainly because of the high cost of space technology and its applications and the conditions for their marketing, which, added to other factors, form barriers preventing the developing countries from benefiting from the advances made worldwide.

8. For these reasons, Colombia wishes to submit the following initiatives aimed at overcoming these obstacles:

(a) Upgrading of international and regional databases with a view to allowing them to be consulted electronically;

(b) Diversification of international cooperation arrangements;

(c) Establishment of a mechanism enabling the different regions to adopt a coordination strategy and harmonized workplan, protecting the interests of the developing countries;

(d) Application of the principle of equitable access to the assignment of frequency bands and the geostationary satellite orbit, account being taken of the needs of developing countries and the geographical location of particular countries;

(e) The incorporation in international programmes involving space technology of a strong commitment to provide training and resources for the participating institutions;

(f) Establishment of financial cooperation programmes—including multilateral bank credits—for the procurement of equipment and construction of facilities for space technology research and development and related applications.